

Message Text

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SUBJECT: 27TH COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN, MARCH 20

TO APRIL 5--FINAL REPORT

SUMMARY. THERE FOLLOWS A DELEGATION EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE 27TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW). THIS IS IN ADDITION TO A MORE DETAILED REPORT WHICH WILL BE SUBMITTED. THE COMMISSION SESSION BEGAN AND ENDED WITH CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES--ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN AND A RESOLUTION ON APARTHEID--BUT NEVERTHELESS MANAGED TO DEVOTE A LARGE PORTION OF ITS TIME AND ENERGY TO CONSTRUCTIVE WORK. THE US AND OTHER WESTERN DELEGATIONS WORKED CLOSELY WITH LATIN, AFRICAN AND ASIAN DELEGATIONS ON KEY ISSUES CONCERNING THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE PROPOSED 1980 WORLD CONFERENCE, THE FUTURE OF THE COMMISSION, AND IN PUTTING THE EMPHASIS ON PRACTICAL DEVELOPMENT ISSUES. THE EASTERN EUROPEAN GROUP CONCENTRATED, AS EXPECTED, ON EXPLOITING POLITICAL ISSUES AND ON ATTEMPTING TO PUT THE MAIN FOCUS OF FUTURE WORK ON INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY RATHER THAN DEVELOPMENT OR EQUALITY. END SUMMARY.

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1. THE COMMISSION'S AGENDA CONTAINED A LIMITED NUMBER OF ITEMS, BUT PROVIDED ROOM FOR DISCUSSION OF ALL ASPECTS OF THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL STATUS OF WOMEN. SPECIFIC ITEMS INCLUDED A) INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS AND STANDARDS RELATING TO THE STATUS OF WOMEN, B) DEVELOPMENTS RELATING TO THE PROGRAM OF THE

UN DECADE FOR WOMEN, C) PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN EMERGENCY AND ARMED CONFLICT IN THE STRUGGLE FOR PEACE, SELF-DETERMINATION, NATIONAL LIBERATION AND INDEPENDENCE, D) THE EFFECTS OF APARTHEID ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN, AND E) COMMUNICATIONS CONCERNING THE STATUS OF WOMEN.

2. PROGRAM OF THE DECADE AND WORLD CONFERENCE. THE COMMISSION SPENT THE MAJORITY OF ITS TIME ON THE OMNIBUS ITEM PERTAINING TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECADE AND SPECIFICALLY ON DISCUSSING PLANS FOR THE 1980 WORLD CONFERENCE. EARLY IN THE SESSION, THE WESTERN GROUP DECIDED TO CONCENTRATE EFFORTS ON ACHIEVING A PRACTICAL DEVELOPMENT/ACTION ORIENTED AGENDA FOR THE 1980 CONFERENCE, AND TO SEEK TO MOLD THE CONFERENCE INTO A WORKING CONFERENCE RATHER THAN REPEAT THE 1975 CONFERENCE IN MEXICO CITY WHICH WAS A FIRST STEP IN GLOBAL CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING. CONSULTATIONS WITH THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES SHOWED THAT THEY SHARED THE SAME CONCERN--THAT THE EMPHASIS SHOULD BE PLACED ON PRACTICAL ISSUES RATHER THAN A CONTINUATION OF RHETORIC. THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, LED BY INDIA, SUBSEQUENTLY TOOK THE INITIATIVE IN PRODUCING A RESOLUTION, EVENTUALLY ADOPTED BY CONSENSUS, CALLING FOR THE CONFERENCE TO CONCENTRATE ON THE THEMES OF HEALTH, EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION. THE EASTERN GROUP WAS UNSUCCESSFUL

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IN ATTEMPTING TO DIVERT THIS EFFORT AND TO GIVE GREATER EMPHASIS TO PEACE AND DISARMAMENT ISSUES. THE DEVELOPMENT ISSUE IS THE AREA WHERE THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE WESTERN GROUP AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ARE CLOSEST AND WORKING RELATIONSHIPS MOST SUCCESSFUL, AND THE EASTERN GROUP IS LEAST ABLE TO EXERT INFLUENCE. THE US SHOULD, THEREFORE, CONTINUE ITS EFFORTS TO PROMOTE THE ADDITION OF AGENDA ITEMS RELATING TO DEVELOPMENT IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE POLITICIZATION AND MAKE THE MOST OF AN AREA IN WHICH THE US HAS TAKEN A STRONG LEADERSHIP ROLE.

3. FUTURE OF THE COMMISSION. IN VIEW OF THE CONCURRENT INFORMAL MEETINGS OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL AT WHICH THE FUTURE STATUS OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN, AS WELL AS THAT OF OTHER SUB-BODIES OF ECOSOC, WAS BEING DISCUSSED, THE MAJORITY OF THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION AGREED THAT THE COMMISSION SHOULD TAKE ACTION TO FORWARD ITS VIEWS TO ECOSOC TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN ITS DELIBERATIONS ON RESTRUCTURING SCHEDULED FOR THE SPRING SESSION. THE US JOINED OTHER DELEGATIONS IN TAKING THE LEAD ON THIS ISSUE AND ALONG WITH MEXICO, THAILAND AND BELGIUM, COSPONSORED A DRAFT RESOLUTION IN-

VITING ECOSOC TO RETAIN THE COMMISSION AND, AT THE SAME TIME, TO REDEFINE ITS MANDATE. AN ADDITIONAL DRAFT, COSPONSORED BY NIGER, ZAIRE, SENEGAL AND FRANCE WAS TABLED CONCURRENTLY AND THE COSPONSORS OF BOTH TEXTS COMBINED EFFORTS TO PRODUCE A CONSENSUS TEXT FOR TRANSMISSION TO ECOSOC. THE FINAL TEXT FOLLOWED CLOSELY THE LINES OF THE ORIGINAL US PROPOSAL. THE EXERCISE CAUSED SOME ANGUISH TO SWEDEN, UK AND JAPAN. SWEDEN HAD RESERVATIONS REGARDING THE CONTINUATION OF THE COMMISSION WHILE THE UK AND JAPAN ARGUED THAT THEY DID NOT WISH TO PREJUDGE THE RESULTS OF THE ECOSOC DELIBERATIONS. THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WERE SOLIDLY IN SUPPORT OF CONTINUATION OF THE COMMISSION.

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4. POLITICAL ISSUES. THE AGENDA ITEM ENTITLED "PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN EMERGENCY AND ARMED CONFLICT IN THE STRUGGLE FOR PEACE, SELF-DETERMINATION AND NATIONAL LIBERATION AND INDEPENDENCE" DID NOT PRODUCE THE EXPECTED VITRIOLIC DEBATE AND CONTENTIOUS RESOLUTIONS WHICH ORDINARILY ENSUE FROM SUCH ITEMS. IN VIEW OF THE RECENT ISRAELI ACTIONS IN LEBANON, THE WESTERN GROUP EXPECTED THE WORST ON THIS ITEM. THE FRG, THEREFORE, DECIDED TO TAKE THE LEAD AND TABLE A CONSTRUCTIVE DRAFT RESOLUTION ON THIS SUBJECT, WHICH FOCUSED ON INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND HUMANITARIAN RELIEF EFFORTS. WHILE THE DEBATE INCLUDED STRONG ATTACKS ON ISRAEL BY THE EASTERN EUROPEANS, THE ARAB DELEGATES, AND THE PLO OBSERVER, NO FURTHER RESOLUTIONS SURFACED AND THE FRG DRAFT WAS ADOPTED BY CONSENSUS WITH ONLY MINOR

AMENDMENTS INTRODUCED BY BYELORUSSIA AND CUBA. WE HAVE NO EXPLANATION AS TO WHY THE EASTERN EUROPEAN SPOILERS ALLOWED THIS AGENDA ITEM TO GO BY WITHOUT CONTROVERSY, BUT CAN ONLY CONCLUDE THAT THEY WERE UNPREPARED FOR A WESTERN INITIATIVE ON THE SUBJECT AND EXPECTED THE ARAB DELEGATES (IN FACT REPRESENTED ONLY BY LIBYA) WOULD TAKE THE LEAD.

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5. THE SOLE ISSUE ON WHICH THE US CAST A NEGATIVE VOTE AT THE COMMISSION AND ON WHICH THE US PARTED COMPANY WITH THE AFRICAN GROUP AND OTHER DEVELOPING COUNTRY DELEGATIONS WAS ON THE APARTHEID ISSUE. THE AFRICAN COSPONSORS OF A DRAFT RESOLUTION ON THE EFFECTS OF APARTHEID ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN SHOWED THEMSELVES AMENABLE TO NEGOTIATIONS ON THEIR TEXT, ALTHOUGH THEIR PROPOSED FINAL VERSION WAS NOT WHOLLY ACCEPTABLE AND THE US, UK AND FRG PREPARED TO ABSTAIN ON THE TEXT. THE INTRODUCTION JUST PRIOR TO THE PLANNED VOTING OF AMENDMENTS BY THE DELEGATION OF BULGARIA LED TO RENEWED NEGOTIATIONS, A REVISED TEXT, A HARDENING OF THE WESTERN POSITION AND A NEGATIVE VOTE BY THE US. AFRICAN DELEGATES REACTED WITH BOTH ANGER AND UNDERSTANDING TO THE WESTERN POSITION. WESTERN DELEGATES MADE CLEAR THAT THEIR OPPOSITION WAS DUE TO THE DIVISIVE ELEMENTS INTRODUCED INTO THE TEXT BY BULGARIA AND THAT THEY SUPPORTED THE OTHERWISE MOSTLY CONSTRUCTIVE TEXT WHICH DEALT PRIMARILY WITH VOLUNTARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. THE DELEGATION OF SWEDEN FOUND ITSELF IN A MOST UNCOMFORTABLE POSITION, AS THE AFRICAN GROUP HAD EARLIER IN THE DAY CHOSEN THE REPRESENTATIVE OF SWEDEN TO REPRESENT THE COMMISSION AT THE WORLD CONFERENCE TO COMBAT RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION. THIS CHOICE WAS MADE IN SPITE OF THE ACTIVE LOBBYING AND EFFORTS OF THE EASTERN GROUP TO NOMINATE BYELORUSSIA. FOLLOWING THE VOTE ON THE APARTHEID RESOLUTION, THE AFRICAN GROUP, AT THE INSISTENCE OF ETHIOPIA AND MADAGASCAR, MET TO RECONSIDER THE SWEDISH NOMINATION. THE MODERATES, LED BY SENEGAL, PREVAILED AND THE GROUP SUBSEQUENTLY ANNOUNCED THAT THE CHOICE OF SWEDEN TO REPRESENT THE COMMISSION WOULD NOT BE REVOKED.

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6. OTHER ISSUES. THE COMMISSION ADOPTED A TOTAL OF 15

RESOLUTIONS, APPROVING ALL BUT TWO BY CONSENSUS. IN ADDITION TO THE ISSUES DISCUSSED ABOVE, THE COMMISSION PASSED RESOLUTIONS IN IMPROVING NATIONAL MACHINERY FOR DEALING WITH WOMEN'S ISSUES, IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH INTERGOVERNMENTAL BODIES OUTSIDE THE UN SYSTEM, STRENGTHENING UN INSTITUTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE WORLD PLAN OF ACTION, AS WELL AS RESOLUTIONS ON CONSUMER PROTECTION, MEASURES TO COMBAT PROSTITUTION, A PROPOSAL TO RATIONALIZE THE REPORTING SYSTEM, AND INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT IN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES.

7. RELATIONS WITH OTHER DELEGATIONS AND GROUPS. THE WESTERN GROUP MET FREQUENTLY TO COORDINATE POSITIONS, ALTHOUGH THERE WAS NOT ALWAYS FINAL AGREEMENT. THE WESTERN GROUP TOOK THE INITIATIVE ON SEVERAL ISSUES, AS NOTED ABOVE, AND WAS SUCCESSFUL IN ACHIEVING ITS GOALS ON SEVERAL KEY ISSUES. THE US AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE WESTERN GROUP WHICH INCLUDED JAPAN MADE A CONCERTED EFFORT TO HOLD FREQUENT CONSULTATIONS AND TO WORK CLOSELY WITH DEVELOPING COUNTRY DELEGATIONS TO FIND AREAS OF COMMON INTEREST AND TO REACH CONSENSUS ON THESE ISSUES. AMONG THE DEVELOPING COUNTRY DELEGATIONS, INDIA, NIGER AND LIBYA EXERCISED THE STRONGEST LEADERSHIP. THE AFRICAN GROUP WAS FAR MORE ACTIVE THAN EITHER THE LATIN OR ASIAN GROUP AND TOOK MORE INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE ITS OWN INTERESTS. NEITHER THE LATIN NOR ASIAN GROUPS APPEARED TO HAVE ANY GROUP COHESION AND INITIATIVES FROM THESE DELEGATIONS WERE DUE TO INDIVIDUAL DELEGATION ACTIONS RATHER THAN CONCERTED GROUP EFFORTS. THE EASTERN AND WESTERN EUROPEAN GROUPS CLASHED FREQUENTLY, BEGINNING WITH THE ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN WITH

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A CONTEST BETWEEN THE CANDIDATES FROM THE UK AND BYELO-
RUSSIA WHICH THE UK CANDIDATE WON IN A SECRET BALLOT.
EASTERN EUROPEAN TACTICS WERE HEAVY-HANDED AND TRANS-
PARENT AND GENERALLY UNSUCCESSFUL UNTIL THE END OF THE
SESSION WHEN THE BULGARIANS SUCCEEDED IN TAMPERING WITH
THE APARTHEID RESOLUTION, CREATING FRICTION BETWEEN THE
AFRICAN AND WESTERN EUROPEAN GROUPS.

8. THE UK CHAIRMAN'S HANDLING OF RESOLUTIONS AND INTER-
PRETATION OF UN PROCEDURES WAS UNFORTUNATE AND RESULTED
IN THE SESSION ENDING ON A NOTE OF CONFUSION WITHOUT AN
ADOPTED AGENDA FOR THE 28TH SESSION. WESTERN DELEGATES
WERE NOT ENTIRELY PLEASED WITH THE SECRETARIAT'S PROPOSED
DRAFT AGENDA FOR THE COMMISSION'S 28TH SESSION AND PRO-
POSED SEVERAL AMENDMENTS. THE CHAIRMAN, HOWEVER,
ADJOURNED THE SESSION WITHOUT TAKING ACTION ON EITHER THE
AMENDMENTS OR THE ORIGINAL DRAFT.

9. CONCLUSION. IN THE DELEGATION'S VIEW, THE 27TH
SESSION PRODUCED CONSTRUCTIVE AND USEFUL RESULTS, WHICH
WILL BE CARRIED FORWARD AND REFLECTED IN THE 1980 WORLD
CONFERENCE. THIS SHOULD HELP TO DETERMINE THE DIRECTION
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OF THE FUTURE WORK OF THE COMMISSION. LEONARD

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